11: India G-4, 5 (1960-1961) 1962 AWll Kerala AWll

crops is about 8 per cent of the gross cropped area. A direct consequence of this type of cropping pattern is the high degree of commercialization which has been attained in the agricultural sector. This has important implications for the State economy. The State exports its commercial crops, and imports its foodgrain requirements. In this exchange the State stands to gain since cash crops yield far higher return per unit of area than the food crops. Secondly, quite a few of the commercial crops grown in the State are of a perennial nature and require large investments. This has led to the establishment of numerous large scale organized plantations and farms, although small farms also play an important role.

2.6 A chronic food deficit is the third important feature of the agricultural sector, mentioned above (para 2.1). The current production of foodgrains is roughly 967,000 tons. Current requirements on the basis of a norm of 17 ozs.[1] of foodgrains per day per adult (unit) work out to a figure of 24 lakh tons. The gap between food requirements and the current level of production thus works out to over 50 per cent of total requirements. This is higher than in any other State. However, this need not cause excessive anxiety. It is not necessary for every State in the Union to try and achieve self-sufficiency in food at the cost of other more valuable commercial crops. From the long run point of view, the aim should be to strike a balance between supply and demand for foodgrains at the national, rather than, strictly, at the level of the State. The psychological desire to attain a balance between local supply and demand for foodgrains in the State is a legacy of the lean period of 1940–50 when the State was hard hit by the severe food shortage prevailing in the country.

Climate and Geographical Factors

2.7 The climate and rainfall in Kerala are excellently suited to the prevailing cropping pattern. The climate is cool and humid in the high ranges while it is humid and warm in the plains. The range of temperature variations during the year is very small, the maximum never going beyond 90°F and minimum rarely below 75°F. The humidity, however, is very high in the rainy season—about 90 per cent. The State is fortunate in respect of rainfall. The normal annual rainfall is 95 inches a year ; it may be as high as 150 inches in the high ranges, but nowhere it is less than 65 inches. Most of the precipitation occurs during May to September when the State receives the south-west monsoon. Taking the State as a whole, it may be said that it is one of the most wet areas in the country (Table 1).[2] Assam has about the same normal rainfall as Kerala. Only the Konkan coast (Bombay) and South Kanara (Mysore) exceed it. The annual deviation in rainfall is also comparatively low with the co-efficient of mean deviation at 6.5 per cent for Travancore-Cochin and 9.2 per cent for Malabar (Table 1). On the whole rains are more reliable in Kerala than in most other States.

2.8 Kerala has two distinct geographical divisions, namely, the Travancore-Cochin and the Malabar area. The soils of Travancore-Cochin area are generally

[1] The Nutritional Advisory Committee to the Government of India recommended 18 ozs. of foodgrains per adult unit per day as the desirable norm. We have used a slightly smaller figure (17 ozs. per day) in our calculations.

[2] [Table, appearing on p. 269 of the text, has not been processed – Analyst]